

# ROTOVUE

Serving Marine Corps Air Station New River and Jacksonville, N.C.

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## News

### Commandant's Message on Suicide

Recent reports of suicide in the Marine Corps highlight a disturbing trend that needs our immediate attention and renewed commitment. We must focus our attention on ensuring every possible measure is taken to battle this tragic and senseless loss of life. One Marine lost to suicide is one too many.

The number of reported Marine Corps suicides for FY01 was 20. To date, there have been seven reported Marine Corps suicides in FY03 - three in October, and four in November. If the current trend continues, we will effectively double the suicide rate of last year.

Experience shows that numerous factors contribute to death by suicide. Warning signs are often presented to Marines close to the victim, but these are sometimes ignored. The Marine Corps has had an aggressive program of suicide awareness training for many years now. We need to continue our education programs and emphasize awareness on the part of all Marines. My purpose in sending this ALMAR is to reinforce our ongoing initiatives and sound a call for action.

When Marines and Sailors exhibit warning signs, we all need to facilitate the positive and effective intervention of our trained professionals: unit chaplains, medical officers, and men and women in our community service centers. It is essential that we use every available resource at our disposal to prevent the loss of life caused by suicide. The first step is to identify the risk. By continuing to work together at all levels in the chain of command we can greatly reduce risk factors that contribute to these tragic deaths.

"Taking care of our own" has been a hallmark of the United States Marine Corps for 227 years. There is no substitute for the vital role that each of us plays in suicide prevention. Semper Fidelis, James L. Jones, General, Commandant of the Marine Corps

*Have a safe  
and Happy Holiday*

## Holiday celebrations aboard Station

*See related stories, pages 14&15*





## Marine Corps Uniforms Online

Enlisted Marines can now order uniform items online from the Marine Corps Uniform Catalog. Although the new camouflage uniform is not expected to be available online until January, Marines are able to order a variety of uniform items from the convenience of their own homes. The online catalog is a service offered through the coordination of Marine Corps Community Services and the Uniform Support Center and can be found at [www.usmc-mccs.org/uniforms/index.htm](http://www.usmc-mccs.org/uniforms/index.htm) or by visiting [www.usmc.mil](http://www.usmc.mil). Questions about ordering should be directed to Uniform Support Center Customer Service at 1-800-368-4088.

## Toys for Tots Campaign

The Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots campaign is still underway. Campaign coordinators are urging companies and individuals to help Marines deliver a message of hope to millions of needy children throughout the nation. To date, the program has attained only 75 percent of its 2002 revenue goal and only 60 percent of its corporate toy donation goal. During last year's campaign, the Marine Toys for Tots Foundation supplemented local collections with 7.3 million toys valued at over \$40 million. These contributions gave millions of less fortunate children the opportunity to experience a joyful Christmas. To help with the Toys for Tots campaign, visit the Marine Toys for Tots Foundation's web site at [www.toysfortots.org](http://www.toysfortots.org) or visit the nearest toys drop off point in the local area. Your contributions are greatly appreciated.

## Tricare Dental Program Update

The office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, Health Affairs, has authorized a premium deduction rate increase for the Tricare Dental Program. The increased dental premium deduction amount will be effective January 2003, for February 2003 coverage. The rate for active duty and reserve single dependent enrollment will increase to \$8.14 and the rate for family premiums for active duty will increase to \$20.35. Defense Finance and Accounting Services, Kansas City, will automatically adjust the premium deduction amounts to reflect the new rates that will appear on the January 2003 leave and earnings statement. Additional information about the premium increase can be found at [www.ucci.com](http://www.ucci.com) or by contacting the Tricare Dental Plan enrollment and billing department at 1-888-622-2256.

## New River Photo Lab Hours

For those needing photos taken for promotion, passports, civilian I.D., command board or chaser I.D., the Combat Visual Information Center is open Monday through Thursday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., in Building AS-425. Due to a shortage in staff and other obligations, the photo lab may close on occasion during lunchtime hours. For more information, call 449-6826.

# Front page

*photo by Lance Cpl. Misty D. Salinas*

**During this Holiday season aboard the Air Station Rudolph is just one of the novelties that made the season brighter for children of all ages.**

## Treasure Trash Hunt

Those aboard MCAS New River are reminded that the treasure trash hunt is still in effect. If you see trash around the Air Station, pick it up! Not only does picking up trash aid in efforts to beautify the base, but it could also lead to a 96-hour liberty pass for servicemembers or a day off of work for civilian employees. Sergeant Maj. V.G. Dwyer, Air Station sergeant major, has strategically placed "reward" stickers on trash found around the base. Those who find the trash with a sticker should bring it to Dwyer to redeem their reward.

## New River Tax Center To Open

Tax season is just around the corner, and the Station tax center is scheduled to open its doors, Jan. 10, 2003 at Building AS-232 next to the chapel. The tax center will take walk-in clients and appointments. If an individual has a complicated return, which involves extensive mutual fund activity including distributions during 2002, rental properties, small businesses and things of that nature, the staff will require the individual make an appointment.

Clients are encouraged to make appointments with complicated returns because it calls for more attention and time to ensure the return is being done correctly, said Cpl. Greg Antrican, the center noncommissioned officer in charge. "We are trying to keep the wait down to less than 20 minutes per client on a standard return, but we have such a large volume of customers immediately following the distribution of the W-2s that the wait may be somewhat longer during the first week or two," said Antrican.

Clients must also bring all the appropriate documents when having their taxes done. This includes all W-2 forms from any job during 2002, daycare provider's name with address and social security number or employer identification number. Paperwork on mortgage interest paid, charitable contribution receipts and education expenses are also required, Antrican said.

In addition to the documents, taxpayers need to bring social security cards for their spouse and dependents. If the client changed his or her name during the year, then either needs to bring a driver's license or an identification card with his or her former name. This will prevent the Internal Revenue Service from rejecting returns due to mismatched names and socials.

"There are numerous tax credits and other benefits taxpayers need to be aware of to ensure they are receiving the full amount of refund they are due," said Antrican. "The education credit, earned income credit, and child and dependent care credit are just a few of the benefits for which taxpayers may be eligible."

The tax center and its electronic filing system are here to serve military members and their families assigned to New River. If a squadron needs us to set up a special time and date to help their shift workers or personnel preparing to deploy, we will do whatever it takes to accommodate them, Antrican said.

The tax center's hours will be from 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday from Jan. 14 to Feb. 5. Beginning Feb. 6, the hours will change because of scheduled appointments. The new hours will be 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, while Tuesdays and Fridays hours are 8:30 to 11:30 a.m.



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# Security concerns still prevalent

## *Stop Loss affects Marines aboard Air Station*

**Lance Cpl. Misty D. Salinas**  
correspondent

With the recent increase of tensions overseas and the terrorists attacks Sept. 11, 2001, increased security aboard Station and other Marine Corps bases has become an important asset.

Along with the increased security came an increased demand for personnel to fill the needed force protection posts. Various tools have been utilized to accomplish this goal.

One such tool has been the implementation of Stop Loss.

"Stop Loss is a policy whereby Marines that normally would be discharged at their [end of active service], or in extreme cases those that would retire, are not allowed to get out," said Lynn Burks, Station military personnel administrator. "That is why it is 'Stop Loss,' you stop the loss of a Marine out of the Corps."

This Stop Loss applies to all military occupational specialties. In October, Marine Corps Air Bases

East were given a certain quota, 80 Marines, to fill security slots for Quantico, Beaufort, Cherry Point and New River.

"Of that quota, nobody came out and said you can have this many, instead they asked how many we could Stop Loss," said Burks.

An end of active service roster for Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron was pulled and a list was made of all of the Marines getting out during the time frame they were looking at. Only 10 Marines had an EAS date during that time frame, and nine of them are expected to be effected by Stop Loss. Currently, this initiative does not effect retirees, disability, hardship or administrative discharges.

The Marines involved are taking the sudden change in plans with true Marine Corps spirit.

"I understand the need, especially if there was a sudden need for units aboard New River to deploy," said Cpl. Jason V. Hayes, Station tower watch supervisor.

Before the Stop Loss, Hayes was slated to get out

Dec. 29. Another Marine was slated to get out Jan. 3, 2003.

"I had a month and half left, so yes I was ready to get out but I signed an eight-year contract and the Marine Corps needs me," said Cpl. Andrew Coleman, Station ordnance technician.

Another way force protection needs are being met is by shops augmenting someone, for approximately 35 days, to fill force protection slots. When that Marine completes that time someone else is sent. They are also looking for reservists to volunteer for active duty to aid in filling force protection needs.

"I think the size of our command is definitely an advantage," said Burks. "We know these Marines, and we were able to bring them in individually and determine how this was going to affect them and their lives. This is only one tool at our disposal and we are not out to ruin anyone's life over it."

"We want people to be aware of this, to keep this in the back of their mind that the possibility of being affected by Stop Loss is out there," said Burks.

## 'Wolverines' restore Station landmark

**1st Lt. Dave Kummer**  
Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron-29

The "Wolverines" of Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron-29 recently hoisted a vintage UH-34 Choctaw back onto its pedestal at the front gate of MCAS New River.

The event marked the culmination of restoration efforts to bring new life to a familiar Air Station landmark.

Work on the historic aircraft posed some special challenges for MALS-29 Marines. On first inspection, the restoration team found severe corrosion, seized bearings, and dry rotted tires. Marines had to look outside normal channels for replacement parts and technical specifications. The Marine

Museum at Quantico, VA, and the "Flying Tigers" of Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron-361, a Marine veterans group who flew the aircraft in Vietnam, provided valuable assistance in locating part manufacturers and technical manuals.

The restoration involved replacing the tires and bearings, corrosion treatment, painting, and marking the aircraft. The UH-34 restoration provided the Wolverines with an opportunity to showcase capabilities typically found in a Marine aviation logistics squadron such as structural repair, corrosion treatment, tire/wheel maintenance, ground support equipment, and dynamic component repair. Once repairs were completed, the aircraft was towed to the



Sgt. Christine C. Odom

front gate and MALS-29 Marines were aided by the heavy lifting capability of Marine Wing Support Squadron-272 to lift the aircraft back into place.

The project provided MALS-29 with a unique opportunity to honor their predecessors and preserve a piece of Marine aviation history.

**For information on deployed units  
around the globe visit  
[www.usmc.mil](http://www.usmc.mil)**



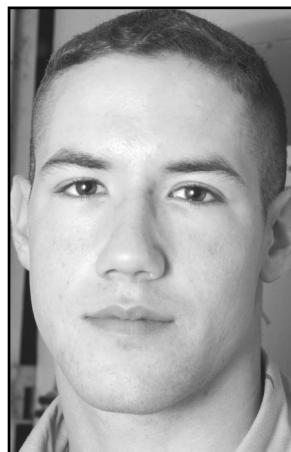
*The RotoVue staff  
would like to wish you  
a safe and happy  
holiday season*



# Opinions

## New countries bring newfound respect to NCO

**Cpl. Andrew W. Miller**  
Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa



### ABOARD USS MOUNT WHITNEY

- Prior to Oct. 13, 2000, I was just a country boy, born and raised in a town smaller than Jacksonville, N.C. I was doing well for myself. I had a good job and lots of friends and could be found at any given time cruising on my motorcycle, but something clicked in my head that

maybe I was too comfortable there. I had to get out and see some different places for a little while, so what better way is there than to serve your country? My Marine Corps career was about to begin, taking me across several different states and to my biggest adventure yet, out of the country.

Sure enough, Jan. 9, 2001 rolled around, and I was stepping off the bus at Parris Island, S.C. This may not be that big of a deal to some people, because that is where most of us went; however, I still take pride in that fact and feel it is worth mentioning. Since then, I have found myself at Marine Combat Training at Camp Geiger, N.C., the Defense Information School, Fort Meade, Md., and I am currently stationed in Jacksonville, at my first duty station, Marine Corps Air Station New River, N.C.

Ok, so I haven't been all over the United States yet, but I'm on to bigger things now. I'm writing to you today from *USS Mount Whitney* (LCC/JCC 20) as part of Combined Joint Task Force- Horn of Africa. That's right, this Tennessee native is overseas for the first time, preparing to do my part in the war against terrorism, and as I write, I have already been to two different countries. For someone practically brand new to the Corps, not even at the two-year mark in my enlistment yet, going overseas has been kind of scary.

It wasn't the fact that I was going to be on a ship for a long time that bothered me. It wasn't that I was going to Africa, which can be one of the hottest and driest places on earth either. What was bothering me a little was that I was about to see new cultures and meet new people who spoke totally different languages. I felt completely unprepared.

As the ship pulled into U.S. Naval Station Rota, Spain, I could already tell I was going to

have an interesting time. The first thing everyone did as soon as they stepped off the ship was find the nearest currency exchange and trade American dollars for Euro dollars. This was my first time using Euros, and it looked like monopoly money to me.

I had never been to Spain before, so I thought it would be of some help to go out with a large group of people, hoping someone would know their way around. We took a guided tour of Seville, the capital of Andalucia, and I was absolutely amazed. The churches and historic buildings were beautiful, and the Spanish food in the restaurants was delicious. I had plenty of opportunities to check out the gift shops to pick up souvenirs for my family and to almost get run over. Did I mention that before? Yes, the drivers and narrow roads take some getting used to also, but it was nothing I couldn't handle.

Seeing the sights and sounds in Spain was quite an experience for me. Everything about it was hard, even ordering food. It made me wish I had paid more attention to the Spanish teacher in high school; however, I did pick up a word or two here and there while in Spain.

Our next stop was Valetta, Malta, a tiny island in the Mediterranean Sea. Luckily for me, most of the natives there spoke English. In Malta, the currency, Lira, is equal to approximately \$2.50 in American dollars, so I didn't spend a lot on gifts.

The driving in Malta is a lot like driving in Spain, except the Maltese people drive on the left side of the road.

Again, I took a guided tour, this time to see the prehistoric temples, some of which are more than 7,000 years old. What intrigued me more than that was getting to see what the locals called "Shark Island," an island viewable from Malta that is said to be breeding grounds for great white sharks. According to some of the locals in a nearby coffee shop and the photos hanging on their wall, it was there that one of the largest great whites ever recorded was landed. The monster was approximately 23 feet long and weighed approximately three tons. I guarantee I would never have seen that in Tennessee!

From my experiences thus far, I feel I've had everything to gain and not a lot to lose from deploying overseas. I have had opportunities to learn about other cultures, languages, food and histories. To me, that's a lot. I have a new found respect for other countries and their people. Hopefully, with a little luck, I will have more opportunities in the future to see some other countries before this deployment is over.

## Awards and Promotions

### Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron-26

#### Navy and Marine Corps

##### Achievement Medal:

Staff Sgt. M.D. Williams  
Staff Sgt. T.H. Lumpkin  
Sgt. A.W. Mardis  
Lance Cpl. R.V. Burt

##### Certificates of Commendation:

Staff Sgt. D. Canty  
Staff Sgt. C.C. Herring  
Sgt. D.C. Mitcham  
Sgt. W.G. Walters  
Sgt. B.S. Floyd  
Cpl. A. Rivera  
Cpl. W.R. White

##### Promotions:

Sgt. W.B. Webb  
Sgt. R.C. Towner  
Sgt. J.C. Riverasaucedo  
Sgt. J.S. Meyer  
Sgt. C.R. Cales  
Sgt. A.K. Brown  
Sgt. B.D. Anderson  
Cpl. J.O. Avila  
Cpl. D.S. Boothe  
Cpl. S.G. Bowen  
Cpl. C.M. Elkins  
Cpl. M.S. Gay  
Cpl. J. Henrik  
Cpl. W.C. Holland  
Cpl. N.R. Scyphers  
Cpl. J.J. Swartzentruber  
Cpl. C.L. Teegarden  
Cpl. J.E. Watkins  
Lance Cpl. C.M. Aghaji  
Lance Cpl. M.K. Altman  
Lance Cpl. C.L. Chappell  
Lance Cpl. M.T. Manfredi  
Lance Cpl. C.A. Vowles

### Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron-266

#### Navy and Marine Corps

##### Achievement Medal:

Sgt. C.E. Plowman  
Cpl. C.D. McDonald

##### Good Conduct Medal:

Cpl. D.M. Beasinger

##### Promotions:

Sgt. Z.T. Ruble  
Cpl. S.E. Terry  
Lance Cpl. M.A. McGarity

### Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron-464

##### Promotions:

Sgt. M.P. Lawrence  
Cpl. C.M. McDonald  
Cpl. G.R. Cherrix  
Cpl. J.T. Cochran  
Lance Cpl. E.M. Roney  
Pfc. I.M. Perry

### ITB Bravo Company

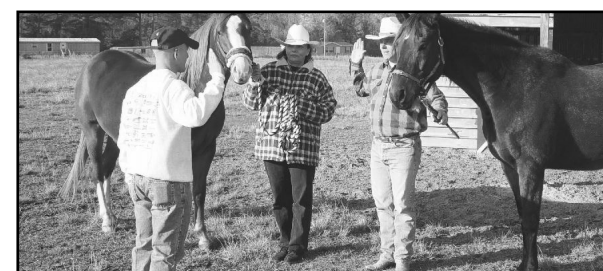
##### Honorman:

Pfc. J.T. Jenkins

##### Meritorious Promotions:

Lance Cpl. J.D. Conkey  
Lance Cpl. D. J. Inman  
Pfc. R.J. Minnis  
Pfc. J.G. Garza Jr.

## Down home re-enlistment



Sgt. Matthew O. Holly

**Gunnery Sgt. Alben Crouch (right), Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron-26 flight equipment staff noncommissioned officer-in-charge, re-enlisted Dec. 6, on his farm.**

# Station hosts Special Olympics

Story and photos by  
Lance Cpl. Misty D. Salinas  
correspondent

The crowd stood and cheered as the athletes made their way around the gym and into the bleachers at the beginning of the Onslow County Fall Special Olympics, Dec. 6.

This is the third year the event has been held aboard MCAS New River.

"New River is probably one of the most instrumental facilities in Onslow County as far as the success of the Special Olympics," said Paul Quinn, Station Marine Corps Community Services director. "The athletes routinely use the fitness center aboard Station for their training."

The events began with an opening ceremony, to include the carrying of the torch by Anthony Lecher, independent athlete. Ruth Hochstrasser, who will be attending the Special Olympics World Games in Ireland, recited the athlete's oath while Cortney Quinn, independent athlete, translated the oath with sign language.

The games ended Friday with the basketball games, dribbling, shooting and target baskets, which were a culmination of events, such as cycling, baccis, golf and bowling, that began in September. The developmental athletes, those in wheelchairs and gurneys, participated in games more suited to their abilities.

In Special Olympics, athletes compete with others of similar physical capabilities and age.

Approximately 90 percent of those involved in the event are military connected in one way or another. Most are family members of retirees or active duty.

Quinn can vouch for the unique challenges in raising a child, with special needs. His adopted daughter, Cortney, 22, who has participated in the Special Olympics for the past eight years, is deaf and autistic. There are wonderful programs in place now that weren't in place in the past, which help families cope with and take care of their special needs, according to Quinn. The families deeply involved in the Exceptional Family Members program, a program designed to provide support to families with special needs, helped inspire the members of the Air Station to become involved in the event.

"Once we held the event the first year, Marines were so excited about volunteering that they wanted to bring it back to New River again," said Quinn.

Last year there were almost 300 volunteers for the event. This year the number of volunteers were limited, and Marines were still calling hop-

ing to be involved. At this year's event there were approximately 140 volunteers, 75 percent of those were Marines, the majority of which were from New River.

Working with the athletes, building bonds and seeing the excitement of the participants is what makes the event so rewarding for the volunteers.

"The best part of the day was when we were playing the games, and the athlete would win, or even just complete the event, and you would see this big

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"This is their Olympics,  
their Super Bowl."

---

Paul Quinn,  
Marine Corps Community Service's director



During the opening ceremony, Anthony Lecher, independent athlete, carried the olympic torch.

smile come across his face," said Cpl. Leobardo Rodriguez, Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron small computer systems specialist.

The volunteers did everything, from helping serve food to participating in the ceremony and games. Most of the volunteers were assigned an athlete. Their job was to meet them at the bus, get them to the bleachers, make sure their scores were turned in and they were fed.

The courage and camaraderie of these athletes is to be admired. Following the spirit of the Corps, they hold strong and true to the credo of 'never leaving a fallen man behind.'

"We were at a swim meet a few years ago, and there were eight people racing for 400 meters," said Quinn. "They were 20 laps in and one athlete was ahead. One of the athletes fell out and all of the others stopped, turned around, went and picked him up and carried him across the finish line. You just don't see that kind of thing everywhere, and this is the Special Olympics so you just give them all gold medals."

The event ended with an awards ceremony where all of the athletes received ribbons.

For the athletes involved, this is something they train for all year, the shining moment in front of a cheering crowd.

"This is their Olympics, their Super Bowl," said Quinn.



Ruth Hochstrasser (left), independent athlete, recited the athlete's oath during the opening ceremony while Cortney Quinn, independent athlete, translated the oath in sign language.



# Six-year-old donates birthday gifts to Toys for Tots

**Rob L. Jackson**  
MCLB Barstow

**MARINE CORPS LOGISTICS BASE BARSTOW, Calif.** -- The annual Marine Corps Reserve Toys For Tots Program got a much-needed shot in the arm recently when it received a donation from a very unique source.

Olivia Davis turned 6 years old Nov. 16, and what makes her different than the average girl her age is that every toy she received as a birthday gift she donated to Toys For Tots.

"How did that happen?" one might think.

Like any child her age, Olivia is at an age where it's "I want, I want," according to Barstow resident Lisa Davis, her mother.

"We had a discussion about that, and I told her that there are many other children out there whose families cannot afford toys for them or ... provide a good meal for them," said Davis.

Olivia wondered what could she do to help and,

after discussing it with her mother, decided to donate all the toys she received to Toys For Tots. However, there was one stipulation to her wish; she wanted a Marine to come and pick them up.

Upon hearing of the donation and Olivia's request, MCLB Barstow dispatched Lance Cpl. Danny Perez, its Marine of the Quarter, to make the pick up. When he arrived she presented him with a box of toys saying, "Thank you for coming out and thank you Marine Corps for helping all the children."

Perez praised and thanked Olivia for the donation. Before leaving they hugged each other and then Perez thanked all the party attendees for their continued support of the Marine Corps Reserve Toys For Tots program.

Although locally the program is getting a slow start, Olivia's donation helps give the program a jolt and adds something special to it. Special in that it's donated by a child for other children less fortunate and will make this year's Toys For Tots campaign even more memorable.



Rob L. Jackson

**Olivia Davis, 6, donated her birthday presents to the Marine Corps Toys For Tots program. Accepting the gifts on behalf of the program is Lance Cpl Danny Perez, MCLB Barstow's Marine of the Quarter.**

# AD

# Marines enjoy pre-holiday festivities

**Story and photos by  
Lance Cpl. Misty D. Salinas**  
correspondent

Before the Beach Boys kicked off their concert, Thursday night, the Single Marine Program aboard Station kicked off their own 'island party.'

The annual SMP Christmas party was held at the Station Enlisted Club with an island theme.

"This year's theme was to support the concert and to remind us that it has to be warm somewhere in the world," said Genevieve Wakefield, Station

SMP coordinator.

The event included music, food and various activities for the Marines to participate including a pool tournament and a spades tournament. The pie-eating contest saw one Marine victorious and the "chubby bunny" contest, a contest in which contestants see how many marshmallows they can fit in their mouth, ended with two Marines tying with 24 marshmallows each.

Prizes were given to the winners of all of the competitions, but it was the camaraderie of the Marines that made the night a success.

"It was cool that SMP put this together for everyone," said Lance Cpl. Michael Ericksen, Marine Aircraft Group 29 fiscal clerk. "It gives the chance for Marines that normally don't socialize to get to know each other."

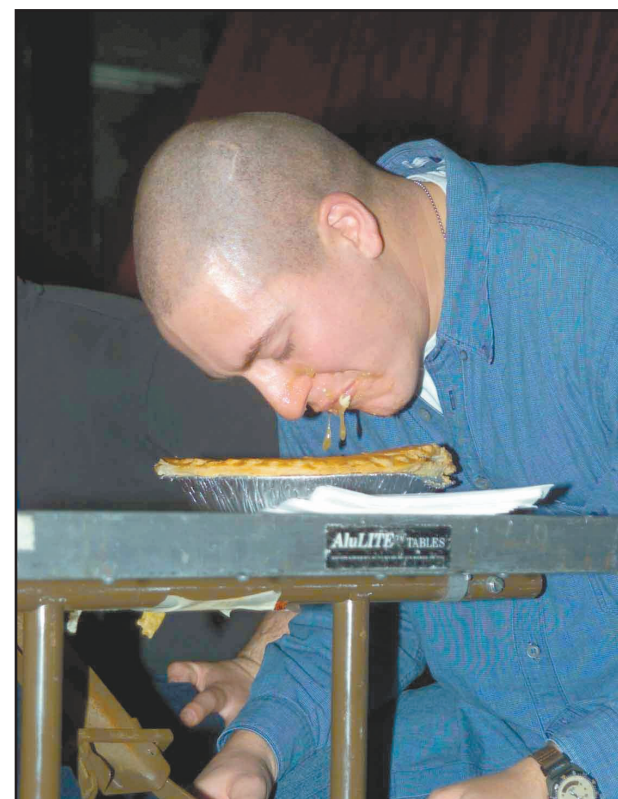
During the holidays when depression is a concern, it is important for Marines to come together and celebrate with their Marine Corps family.

"I know that not all of the Marines will get the opportunity to go home this Christmas," said Wakefield. "That has to be rough on them and we just wanted to make sure they had a way to celebrate Christmas with their peers."

Amid palm trees and Santa, Marines took time to relax and enjoy the spirit of the holidays before heading out to "rock it" with the Beach Boys at the Station outdoor concert site.



**Lance Cpl. Manny Del Rio, Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting crewman, and Lance Cpl. James Debell, Marine Wing Support Squadron-272 heavy equipment operator, both stuffed a record 24 marshmallows in their mouths, winning the "cubby bunny."**



**A pie-eating contest was one of the many events held at the Single Marine Christmas Party, Thursday night.**

## MALS-26 celebrates 'patriotic' Christmas



Lance Cpl. Misty D. Salinas

**Santa Claus was one of the many guest appearances at the Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron-26 family Christmas party, Dec. 7, at the Station Enlisted Club. The families enjoyed food and music while children like Brianna, daughter of Sgt. Dianna Ortiz, Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron-26 supply response division, got the chance to sit on Santa's lap.**

## 'Wolverines' share holiday joy with family



Sgt. Matthew O. Holly

**Marines, Sailors and family members of Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron-29 line up with their children to give Christmas 'wish lists' to Santa at the squadron's Christmas Party held at the Jacksonville Commons Middle School, Dec. 7.**



# Beach Boys bring summertime spirit to Station

**Story and photos by  
Josh P. Vierela**  
correspondent

The Beach Boys were a bit out of their element as they surfed in on a wave of cold weather, Dec. 12 at the MCAS New River outdoor concert site.

Nevertheless, the band brought a spirit of summer fun and music to Marines and families aboard the Air Station.

"A lot of families come out and enjoy our performance," said Mike Love, Beach Boys lead singer.

The night started with the singing of the National Anthem by New River's own Sharon Allen.

Following the anthem, Kris Burritt, of Onslow Beverage, brought in some Yuletide cheer as she sang holiday favorites, such as Santa Baby and Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree, to the one and only Kriss Kringle. After she warmed up the crowd it was time for the Beach Boys to bring a touch of southern California heat to thaw out the huddling masses.

The legendary band bridged the generation gap



**The fans huddle close to keep warm as they watch the Beach Boys put on a show.**

with their classic, easy-to-sing-to-songs.

"I grew up listening to the Beach Boys' music," said 53-year-old Terry Speer, who works at Cherry Point. "I first saw them in 1967 before I went to Vietnam and I thought I would never see them again."

The approximately 2,000 people at the concert were a mixture of the original listeners of the Beach Boys and the newly introduced fans.

"I came out here to listen to fun music and the Beach Boys have a certain ring in their music," said Scott Duvall, 13.

That fun ring in the music brought to life the chilly audience as they danced to hits like "Surfin' USA" and "Barbara Ann."

Also in attendance was one crowd surfing beach ball.

Dressed for the occasion in Hawaiian shirts, Mike Love and Bruce Johnston entertained their fans with jokes about the band's age and flirting with the notion of performing some hip-hop.

After they finished with their play list, the Beach Boys left the stage but were coaxed back on by the crowds chants for an encore. They sang their Christmas classic Little Saint Nick as it started to snow, which were really foam bubbles from a machine. The final song they performed was Fun, Fun, Fun.

"I would have driven from California if I had to in order to see them," said Speer.

The Beach Boys proved they still knew how to party and showed New River an old-fashioned good time in a modern way.

"The show was a rockin' good time," said Burritt.



**Kris Burritt warms up the crowd as she sings "Santa Baby" to the man himself at the New River concert site, Dec. 12.**



**The Beach Boys rock the stage as they perform oldie but goodie fan favorites at the New River concert site, Dec. 12.**

## Corvette Club delivers toys in style



The Twin Rivers Corvette Club out of New Bern came through the front gate of MCAS New River, Dec. 7. There were approximately 20 corvettes carrying toys to be donated to the families of Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron-26 and the Toys for Tots program. This is the seventh year the club has participated.

Lance Cpl. Misty D. Salinas

# AD



# Web-based scams threaten Station security

**Lance Cpl. Jessica L. Moss**  
MCAS Cherry Point

**MARINE CORPS AIR STATION CHERRY POINT, N.C.--** Marines, Sailors and dependents are cautioned against the harmless appearance of solicitation of information that can jeopardize the safety and security of the military community.

Some internet websites ask dependent military wives to videotape military bases, located in the States and overseas, and provide maps of these bases.

Websites request wives to videotape the main gates, housing areas, base exchanges and other facilities. Sites also request information regarding entrance procedures for military bases.

In order to participate in the program, one such site asks interested parties fill out an application form releasing personal information. Those who manage the site, known only as a "Marine Corps Family," maintain it was created to make military life easier.

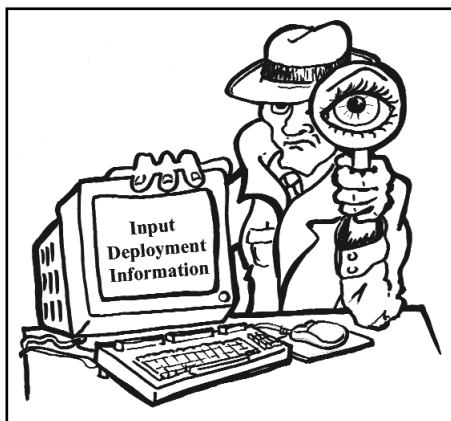


Illustration by Staff Sgt. Matthew A. Butler

However, servicemembers and their families should be cautious of Internet sites or any other means of soliciting information, said Maj. Kerry J. Quinn, the 2nd Marine Expeditionary Force Antiterrorism/Force Protection Officer.

"I would caution personnel on the information they provide to any person or organization that may jeopardize the safety and security of the military com-

munity," said Quinn, native of Bloomfield, Conn.

"If anyone is trying to do harm to a base, having that information makes it much easier to accomplish their objective," said Pfc. Chamawnn A.

Meadows, a computer technician with Marine Wing Headquarters Squadron 2.

"Times, dates and locations of specific unit movement should only be released by authorized or designated personnel [the Public Affairs Office]," said Quinn.

"Military police units provide security using Random Antiterrorism Measures.

Details of these measures, for instance, times of I.D. card checks, are sensitive information that when pieced together like a puzzle can lead to a picture of security vulnerabilities," said Quinn.

Information is a tool and assists our military community in being productive and cohesive during difficult times, such as, deployments, said Quinn. Information that has been

passed by authorized personnel or agencies is acceptable to give out.

"I caution people about any solicitation from people or organizations on the phone, over the internet or even in person," said Quinn. "People shouldn't be scared, just cautious."

Also, Quinn said to be wary of any solicitation from unrepeatable sources.

"Everyone should always be careful of information they give out, even more so during times of war," said Meadows, a native of Washington, D.C.

"Even if the information isn't fully classified, it's still sensitive, and you should go through the proper channels to obtain it and to give it out," said Cpl. James C. Lindsey, a plans NCO with Marine Wing Headquarters Squadron 2 and native of Baytown, Tex.

"The Internet is a great resource, just be cautious on making our community a 'soft' target for would-be terrorists by exposing our vulnerable areas," said Quinn.

# AD

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MCAS New River  
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# AD





# Hundreds gather to celebrate spirit of Christmas

**Sgt. Juan Vara**  
correspondent

Kicking off the spirit of Christmas, hundreds of Marines, Sailors and their family members gathered at the Station Marina, Dec. 8, for the 18th Annual Tree Lighting Ceremony.

The one-mile Jingle Bell Fun Run and Family 5K took place prior to the event, and dozens of participants of all ages inundated the streets of New River with the clinking sounds of jingle bells.

Organized by the New River Marine Corps Community Services, the tree lighting ceremony is an event hosted by New River to emphasize the spirit of the holidays by providing activities for both children and adults.

The event featured music, refreshments, the taping of "Holiday Greetings" by Fox TV, the "Flotilla of Lights," and a visit from Santa.

At 4:30 p.m. the entertainment started with the New River Youth Choir, the New Bern Dance Ensemble and New River's own, Sharon Allen, singing Christmas carols and traditional Christmas songs.

Approximately 55 kindergarten students from the Delalio Elementary School took the stage as the main attraction, under the direction of Costa P. Constaninou, the school's music teacher.

"I thought the kindergarteners were great," said Elizabeth E. Coleman, a student at Brewster Middle School. "The school's music teacher did a great job with all the little kids."

Constantinou, who has a master's degree in music and has been teaching at Department of Defense schools for 22 years, said he worked with

the kindergarteners for about six weeks, two days per week during their music classes in school.

"Their singing and dancing was adorable," said Becky M. Deemer, a student at Brewster Middle School.

According to Constantinou, it took a long time for the kids to coordinate the dancing and singing, but overall it was a great learning experience for them.

"I think Christmas is the time to give," he added. "Instead of having concerts at the school I like to take the kids out to sing."

After the kindergarteners' performance, the "Flotilla of Lights" sailed around the dock for everyone's visual enjoyment. Charles Sharp, New River MCCR recreation supervisor, said the 14 boats decorated with Christmas lights were the most ever to take part in this ceremony.

"This is the fourth year I've come to the Marina for the tree lighting ceremony and it is the best, so far," stated Mickenzie C. Schneider, a student at Brewster Middle School. "The lights on the boats are more creative this year, and I got to see my brother sing with the kids from the elementary school."

With an estimated crowd of 800 people in attendance, the Station Marina welcomed Santa, who received hugs from the children, posed for photographs and led the crowd with the countdown to light up the tree.

"It was a holly-jolly Christmas enjoyed by one and all," said Maj. Doug Peterson, aviation safety officer of Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron-2 out of Cherry Point, who was enjoying the festivities accompanied by his wife and two

children. "We live on the Station and we've come here for the last three years to participate in the 'fun run' and watch the tree lighting."

The ceremony concluded with Amanda Stortz, a member of the New Bern Dance Ensemble, singing "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" next to Santa, surrounded by a large number of children excited to see "Father Christmas" in person.

"This is the first time we've attended the New River tree lighting ceremony," said 1st Lt. Peter L. Morales, a New York City native and maintenance management officer of Marine Wing Support Squadron-272. "I'm used to going to Rockefeller Center, but after seeing all the boats decorated I think this is awesome. Seeing the Christmas tree light up is a little taste of home."

Morales and his wife were some of the brave ones who withstood the cold and stayed for the drawings after the ceremony. They ended up taking home one of the prizes donated by the many local businesses sponsoring the event.

Elizabeth Sweeney, assistant manager of the Station Theater and head coordinator of the ceremony for the fourth year in a row, said key players in making this event possible were Jeanie Klezaras, marketing director; Sharon Allen, sponsorship and advertising specialist; John Pearson, acting manager of the Station Marina; and the Station Marina staff members.



Sgt. Juan Vara

**Kindergarteners from Delalio Elementary School were the main attraction at the 18th Annual Tree Lighting Ceremony. They sang traditional and novelty Christmas songs for an estimated crowd of 800.**



Sgt. Juan Vara

**Organized by New River Marine Corps Community Services, the tree lighting ceremony brought the spirit of the holidays aboard Station.**

# Touch of New York Christmas in North Carolina



Sgt. Juan Vara

**With hundreds of Christmas lights, fake snow, and lighted-animat Christmas figurines, Winter Wonderland is a taste of Rockefeller Center aboard New River.**



Sgt. Juan Vara

**Brothers Keith and Jonathan Dula, enjoy some time together, skating at the Youth Community Center's "Winter Wonderland," Dec. 9.**

## 'Winter Wonderland' fascinates New River in-line skaters

**Sgt. Juan Vara**  
correspondent

In keeping with the spirit of the holidays, New River Marine Corps Community Services welcomes in-line skaters, through Dec. 23, to experience "Winter Wonderland" aboard Station.

A taste of New York City's Rockefeller Center was brought to New River by the MCCR grounds crew, after decorating the Station Roller Hockey Rink with hundreds of Christmas lights and fake snow, and adorning the lawn with lighted-animat Christmas figurines.

"The place looks pretty cool," said Matt P. Mackey, a student at Lejeune High School and avid in-line skater who played recreational youth roller hockey here for three years. "This year they got real into it."

On its opening night, Dec. 9, in-line skaters enjoyed free cookies and hot chocolate provided by representatives of the Station's Single Marine Program.

"This place is great!" Said Keith A. Dula, 9, a student at Delalio Elementary School.

Mike Smith, youth sports coordinator, said Winter Wonderland is a festive-type place where families and friends can gather to enjoy the season.

"The rink is mostly used for recreational youth and adult roller hockey throughout the year," said Christopher M. Miller, assistant youth sports coordinator. "During the Christmas season we like to give everybody a place to skate and listen to Christmas music."

Located on Agan Street at the New River Youth Community Center, the Station Roller Hockey Rink will begin its youth recreational roller hockey season, Jan. 1.



# Personal Service Center

**449-6110/6185**

***www.lejeune.usmc.mil***

**Military Spouse Local Employment Seminar**  
Dec. 31, 9-10 a.m.

**AA Meetings**  
Mondays, 11:50 a.m.-12:50 p.m.

**Retired Affairs**  
Wednesdays/Fridays, 8 a.m.-noon

**Keystone Meetings for Teens**  
1st/3rd Fridays, 6-7 p.m.

**Sign Language Class**  
Tuesdays, 4:30-5:30 p.m.

**Play Mornings**  
Weekdays, Youth Community Center

**Power Hour**  
Weekdays, 4-5 p.m.

**Transition Assistance Program Workshop**  
Dec. 18-19, 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

# AD

# 22nd MEU (SOC) conducts long range helicopter raid in Central Command area of operations

**Gunnery Sgt. Keith A. Milks**  
22nd MEU

In the waning days of its deployment as the landing force for the U.S. Fifth and Sixth Fleets, the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) conducted a long-range helicopter raid exercise deep into a country in the Central Command area of operations.

The operational rehearsal brought together Marines and Sailors from the MEU Command Element and each of its major subordinate elements; Battalion Landing Team 2d Bn., 6th Marines, Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron-261 (Reinforced), and MEU Service Support Group 22.

Transported in CH-53E Super Stallion helicopters, the assault and blocking forces endured four hours of low-level flying before reaching the objective. Mid-way, the helicopters conducted aerial refueling with a KC-130 Hercules from Marine Refueler Transport Squadron (VMGR-452), while another KC-130 refueled an accompanying flight of AV-8B Harrier II attack jets.

Force Reconnaissance Marines, assisted by members of BLT 1/2's Weapons Company, were inserted to conduct the raid on the isolated building complex while Fox Company served as the blocking force, quarantining the area. All the while, AV-8B Harrier II

attack jets and AH-1W Super Cobra attack helicopters provided overhead coverage while the CH-53Es loitered nearby.

After less than 30 minutes on the ground, the Marines in the assault and blocking elements egressed to their CH-53Es who subsequently returned the forces to USS Wasp waiting offshore.

In order to give the AH-1W Super Cobras the 'legs' to reach the objective, HMM-261 (Rein) established a refueling point mid-way to objective using the Tactical Bulk Fuel Dispensing System (TBFDS) from a CH-53E.

In an era where threats may arise hundreds of miles inland, the long-range helicopter raid perfected by the 22nd MEU (SOC) during its pre-deployment training, and executed during its time overseas, gives the MEU a greater warfighting capability than previously known.

This raid came on the heels of nearly five months of duty in the Central Command area of operations, a vast region encompassing the Horn of Africa, South Asia, and Persian Gulf regions. While there, the 22nd MEU (SOC) undertook several counter-/anti-terrorist operations and exercises, including duty in Afghanistan and ashore during a regional stability mission.

For more information, on the 22nd MEU (SOC), visit the unit's website at [www.22meu.usmc.mil](http://www.22meu.usmc.mil).



Gunnery Sgt. Keith A. Milks

**Marines from Fox Co., 2d Bn., 6th Marines, the ground combat element of the 22nd MEU (SOC), carry their 'wounded' comrades to a waiting CH-53E Super Stallion during a long range helicopter raid exercise in the Central Command area of operations. The Marines participated in the exercise during the final days of the MEU's recent deployment as the landing force for the U.S. Fifth and Sixth Fleets.**

# 26th MEU (SOC) Marines enhance air defense capabilities

**Capt. James Jarvis**  
26th MEU

The Low Altitude Air Defense (LAAD) section of the Marine Air Control Group (MACG) detachment of the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable), partici-

pated in their annual Stinger missile shoot, Dec. 3, at Onslow Beach.

The purpose of this training was to complete three of the five gun teams' annual firing, explained 1st Lt. Brad Chatlos, the LAAD section officer in charge. The other two gun teams already completed their training

for the year.

"Our mission is to provide close-in surface to air weapons fire for the defense of forward combat areas, vital areas and installations against low altitude air attacks [from enemy aircraft]," he added.

The detachment brought three Avenger weapon systems, one man-portable Stinger missile launcher and one command and control vehicle. The Avenger weapons system is an eight-missile launch pad mounted on the back of a HUMVEE.

While training at Onslow Beach, the focus was on firing the Stinger missiles from the Avengers and the shoulder fired launcher.

The teams also practiced how to fire missiles from the Avengers using a remote control.

Remote control airplanes were used as targets for this evolution. The gun teams had to concentrate on teamwork in order to track the aircraft and effectively launch missiles to destroy them.

Stinger missiles are able to track and engage aircraft up to an altitude of 10,000 feet and cover a distance of eight kilometers.

Each two-man Stinger team consists of an assistant gunner, who tracks the target aircraft, and a gunner who sights in on the target and fires the missile.

Once the 26th MEU (SOC) deploys, the LAAD section will take on one more task. They will be integrated along other assets to provide emergency defense for the USS Iwo Jima Amphibious Ready Group.

After refining their precision shooting and teamwork, the detachment is now ready to answer the 26th MEU (SOC) commanding officer's call for air defense if needed during their upcoming deployment.


To learn more about the 26th MEU (SOC) visit <http://www.26meu.usmc.mil> for the most up to date information regarding the unit's training and upcoming deployment.



Lance Cpl. Nathan E. Eason

**A Stinger missile launches from one of the MEU's Avenger weapon systems, while the Low Altitude Air Defense section was training three of their five gun teams at Onslow Beach.**





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AD



Merry Christmas, viewers! LCTV-10 hopes you have a wonderful and blessed Christmas season. This year has been an incredible growing experience for LCTV-10 and we have a lot to be thankful for. Feel free to email us at ovalletl@lejeune.usmc.mil to share your comments with us on our new look and programming schedule.

*Capt. Teresa Ovalle,  
Lejeune Cable Television officer-in-charge*

### **The Morning Report**

✓ The Morning Report will air for an hour this week. It's our special holiday edition. If leave is in your plans during Christmas or New Years, don't fret, this show will for air for the entire holiday season, from Dec. 20 to Jan. 2. The Morning Report airs at 8 and 11:30 a.m., 5:30, 9:30, and 11:30 p.m., and again at 3 and 5:30 a.m.

### **Your Corps**

✓ Join Your Corps for a week of stories from around the Marine Corps. The 20th anniversary of the Vietnam Wall is observed in the nation's capitol and British Royal and U.S. Marines train together during close-quarters battle exercises. Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan, completes a base-wide emergency response exercise and Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, Calif., opens its gates, for a Boot Camp Challenge. Also in this Marine packed episode is the French Legion of Honor award presented to a Marine and a feature on one of only two Marines to have ever won the Marine Corps Marathon. All this and more this week. Your Corps airs daily at 9:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m.

### **Music Videos**

✓ Tune in for Music Videos at 12:30 and 8 p.m. and midnight. Aerosmith, Dave Matthews Band and JA Rule are just a few of the groups that will be packed into these music video segments.

### **Marine Aviation History**

✓ A Marine pilot and his aircrew want nothing more than to get in the air and stay there. But the Marines did not always have an air component. Through history, the Marines have proven themselves over and over again in the air and on the ground, using the "Air-Ground team" to accomplish the mission. From the very beginning of Marine Aviation to today's aircraft and flight crews, it's all here. History of Marine Aviation airs daily at 4:30 p.m. and 4:30 a.m.

### **Life in the Corps**

✓ You wanted to be a Marine. Boot Camp was a challenge, but you made it through. You wear your accomplishments proudly into the fleet. Now what? This half-hour film discusses the challenges of life in the Corps. Experiencing new challenges, realizing it's different than what you expected and knowing that this is your new way of life for at least four years can be a bit overwhelming. The message that rings loud and clear in Life in the Corps is that you get out of your Marine Corps experience what you put into it. Learn what you can and take that knowledge with you wherever you go, whether it's a path in the Marine Corps or a civilian lifestyle. Life in the Corps airs at 10 a.m., 1:30 and 7 p.m. and again at 2:30 a.m.

# AD

# 'Untouchables' stay proficient in forward arming, refueling

**Story and photos by  
Sgt. Juan Vara**  
correspondent

Marines from Marine Wing Support Squadron-272 returned to New River, Dec. 6, after conducting a quarterly training exercise aboard Marine Corps Training Area Camp Davis.

Approximately 47 "Untouchables" from the fuels, expeditionary airfield, communications, weather, aircraft rescue and firefighting, medical, and explosive ordnance disposal sections of the squadron successfully set up and operated a Forward Arming and Refueling Point, Dec. 2-5, approximately 22 miles south of New River.

Gunnery Sgt. Jay C. Renard, staff noncommissioned officer in charge of the fuels section, said the purpose of the exercise was to provide advanced training for the Marines in the Air Base Ground Defense Platoon and to test-out a new M4900 Aircraft Refueling Capable tanker.

The FARPEX provided the expeditionary airfield section an opportunity to utilize all the assets of the Minimum Operating Strip Lighting System. According to Cpl. Bryan T. Nolte, expeditionary airfield lighting and maintenance technician from Montgomery, Ala., this is part of the lighting and

marking configuration for an expeditionary airfield.

"This lighting system allows continuous operations with remote-powered coordination, eliminating the need for a large quantity of electrical wires spread across the runway," Nolte added. "Only Marine wing support squadrons carry this type of lighting and one of the good things about it is that we can control the intensity of the lights to prevent blinding the pilots at night."

Renard said the fuels division recently had a large personnel turnover and the exercise helped the unit keep-up individual training standards and mission essential tasks listings. In what is called "hot refueling," helicopters from various squadrons aboard the Station were refueled with their engines running and their rotors spinning.

"We have a lot of new Marines and we're teaching them everything from how to refuel the aircraft to hand and arm signals to guide the aircraft to land," stated Cpl. Marco F. Suarez, a motor transport operator from Fort Lauderdale, Fla. "They receive basic knowledge on the equipment at their MOS [military occupational specialty] school, but it's here in the field where they get hands-on experience and hone their skills."

For Pfc. Jessica Trevino, a bulk fueler from Victoria, Texas, the FARPEX was her first time in a

field environment since she left Marine Combat Training, and her first time guiding helicopters to refueling points.

"I knew a little about all this, but I learned a lot by actually doing it and getting the feeling of it," she said.

MWSS-272 Marines and Sailors will have an opportunity to test their knowledge gained from the recent training exercise when they deploy to the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center at Twentynine Palms, Calif., to take part in Combined Arms Exercises 3- and 4-03, from January to March.



**A CH-46E Sea Knight helicopter from Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron-261 "takes a drink" at the Forward Arming and Refueling Point set up by Marine Wing Support Squadron-272 aboard Marine Corps Training Area Camp Davis, Dec. 4.**



**Refuelers stand by the new M4900 Aircraft Refueling Capable tanker as an AH-1W Super Cobra helicopter from Marine Light/Attack Helicopter Squadron-269 approaches the expeditionary runway at Marine Corps Training Area Camp Davis, Dec. 4.**



**Marines from the fuels section of Marine Wing Support Squadron-272 hook up an Aircraft Refueling Capable tanker to a CH-46E Sea Knight helicopter from Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron-261 at an expeditionary airfield set up aboard Marine Corps Training Area Camp Davis, Dec. 4.**



# Defending freedom abroad: Marines engaged in America's newest war

**Sgt. John Sayas**  
MCB Camp Butler

**KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan** -- With the sight of concertina wire surrounding many areas of the camp, and buildings in shambles and filled with bullet holes, it remains clear to troops living here that they are in a very hostile environment.

Since the fall of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and al-Qaeda, along with its senior leaders in hiding, American and allied troops have bivouacked here in the southern part of this war-torn country, while preparing for any future attacks that may arise.

Security around the airfield remains a high priority. Barbed-wire fences surround the area, as U.S. Army soldiers, scattered throughout the perimeter of the camp, stand guard looking for signs of attack or infiltration from any uninvited guests.

Despite all the security, small skirmishes have occasionally appeared outside the camp, and mortar rounds fly overhead unexpectedly with no real target in site.

"The rocket attacks we have had make you realize where you are," said Staff Sgt. Fredrick A. Smith, communications chief, Tactical Air Operations Center, Marine Air Control Squadron-4, Marine Air Control Group-18, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing.

After seeing the tragedies of Sept. 11, 2001 and other attacks around the globe, the Marines know that terrorists do exist. What they don't know is how or where they will strike next.

"We are well aware that we are in a combat situation," said Smith the Kingsland, Ga., native said. "The Marines know this is a real-world mission because they are carrying their weapons around with them at all times...we are always alert to our surroundings and what's going on."

Smith and the rest of his unit arrived here last month to replace fellow Marines of their detachment, as part of six-month deployment in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

The squadron, headquartered at Marine Corps Air Station Futenma on Okinawa, Japan, along with other air command and control agencies within Marine Air Control Group-18, has been

deployed here and in Uzbekistan since April 2002 in support of America's war against terrorism.

With M16A2 service rifles by their sides, the Marines are ready to fight back any type of offensive the enemy may have for them. In the meantime, they have another mission that is critical to the success of daily operations being conducted here and surrounding areas of Afghanistan.

"Everybody pretty much knows why we are here. There isn't any question about that," said Staff Sgt. Robert L. Sidders, technical controller and Bell Fountain, Ohio native. "A lot of these guys are here for the first time, not just on a real-world operation, but on any type of field operation. They get a chance to do something that makes a difference."

The unit, comprised of radar and radio operators, communication technicians, repairmen, motor transportation personnel and a headquarters staff, has the responsibility of detecting, identifying and controlling intercepts of hostile aircraft and missiles for allied forces. Some of their other tasks include managing anti-warfare assets, selecting and assigning weapons to engage enemy air threats, and regular maintenance of equipment and gear.

The Marines also spend a lot of time training on basic battle skills, equipment and how the unit functions during their mission, according to Smith. The training helps the Marines work together more proficiently and effectively while conducting operations here.

"We are not the actual element on the 'wire.' We're here in support of the Army and Air Force, so we have time for training classes on things such as leadership and Marine Corps Institute courses," Smith said. "We give classes on the equipment we have out here and how the whole operation works because we have other Marines from different units trying to gel with the Marine Air Control Squadron-4 unit. It's hard, but we as Marines, we learn to adapt and overcome."

Marines have also learned to adapt to the sometimes-harsh conditions here. For some of the Marines, it is their first time being in this type of environment where dust storms are a common



Sgt. John Sayas

**Lance Cpl. Eric R. Evans, Syracuse, N.Y., native and Cpl. Ricard Defreitas, New York City native, both switchboard operators with Tactical Air Operations Center, Marine Air Control Squadron-4, dig a trench to lay communication wire in Afghanistan. These Marines, along with the rest of their unit, are deployed to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.**

occurrence, causing equipment to malfunction and weather conditions become extremely hot or brutally cold. Others have adapted fairly well having been here before or through training they received in some places like Twentynine Palms, Calif., and Yuma, Ariz.

"It is an interesting experience," said Lance Cpl. Eric C. Johnston, radar repairman, and St. Louis, Mo., native. "The living conditions are a lot better than the way they were when I was here the first time."

Some of the basic commodities the Marines have here, i.e., cable, warm

showers and hot meals, keep morale high, along with letters of support and care packages filled with food and snacks not available here from family and friends back home. But most importantly, they have learned to rely on one another to stay motivated and get back home safely.

"I have a bunch of great guys out here. They are truly outstanding Marines," Smith said. "I am very proud of the effort we are making out here and proud to be a part of Operation Enduring Freedom. I hope we get this operation done quickly, so that we can get everyone home to their families."

# Military involvement in Djibouti deemed difficult, potentially dangerous

**Jim Garamone**

American Forces Press Service

**CAMP LEMONIER, Djibouti** -- Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld thanked the U.S. service members based here for their sense of duty. He said their service in the country on the Horn of Africa is important.

He spoke in a newly built maintenance facility on the base, adjacent to the Djibouti International Airport. Many of the 900 service members stationed at the base attended his talk. Rumsfeld then took questions.

Rumsfeld spelled out why the men and women are in Djibouti. "We need to be where the action is," he said. "And there is no question but that this part of the world is an area where there is action."

He said their job in the global war

on terrorism is difficult "and potentially dangerous."

He told the men and women that they carry on their shoulders not only "the values of America, but the hopes of the world."

He said they're in place to prevent another more devastating attack. He said thousands of people died in the attacks on New York and Washington on Sept. 11, 2001. But there are regimes that have the means and will and connections to terrorist organizations to use weapons of mass destruction to kill tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of innocent men, women and children.

"Our job, our mission, is to stop attacks of such magnitude," he said.

He said their presence in Djibouti proves the United States is not in this war alone, and that countries must

unite to fight terror organizations and states that sponsor them.

The secretary answered some questions from the troops. One asked about pay and he explained that all service members will receive a 4.1 percent pay raise in January with mid-level enlisted personnel and mid-level officers receiving a targeted raise.

Another asked if there was some thought to lowering the age where reserve component personnel can receive retirement pay from 60 to 55. He said no and went on to explain that he is looking at ways that would allow some personnel to serve beyond their high years of tenure.

A third asked the secretary if Camp Lemonier would become permanent. He said there is a terrorist threat in the region from Yemen and in the southern part of Saudi Arabia. "These are seri-

ous problems," he said. "I suspect that if you look out one, two, three or four years, this facility will be here."

Finally, a service member asked the secretary about the possibility of getting smallpox vaccinations. He said there is smallpox vaccine available and "first responders" -- police, firefighters and medical personnel -- will be the first to receive the vaccination.

"Second will be the people likely to be in a field of action where this disease could be a problem," he said. The vaccinations will be "rolling out" in the weeks and months ahead.

The secretary again thanked the personnel for their service. "Each of you volunteered. ... You offered to put your lives at risk so that all Americans can be free and live in peace," he said. "That's a very special calling you've undertaken."

# Pilots honored for flying in face of terrorism

**Lance Cpl. Jeremy M. Vought**

MCB Camp Pendleton

**MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP PENDLETON, Calif.** -- The skies over Camp Pendleton and Afghanistan may appear alike, but as some pilots quickly learned, the ground over which they fly is much different.

While soaring peacefully through the surreal night in an AH-1W Super Cobra attack helicopter over Afghanistan, the world changed instantly for helicopter pilot Capt. Richard F. Sims when a bright light engulfed the darkness. This was no firework show; it was a rocket-propelled grenade and it was coming right at him.

Sims made it through the night unscathed, but his expert flying skills didn't go unnoticed. He was one of the Cobra pilots from Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 369 who were awarded air medals Nov. 21.

The pilots flew various day and night combat missions over Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, but more specifically, were recognized for their contributions to the U.S. Army's three-week Operation Anaconda.

The ceremony was preceded by an all-out display called "Flying the Barn." The Gunfighters accomplished this feat by putting 21 of the squadron's 22 aircraft in the sky.

Col. Terry G. Robling, assistant wing commander 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing and Lt. Col. Mike Rocco,

Gunfighters commander, awarded the air medals to Maj. Victor S. Stover, Bruce W. Laughlin and Alexander G. Hetherington as well as Sims and fellow Capt. Richard B. Ashford, Philip E. Eilertson, Michael H. Johnson, and William F. Sieve.

The eight were recognized for their achievements while attached to the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit.

Sims, who flew roughly 45 combat missions over Afghanistan, said it made him feel good and proud to receive the award, but he was just doing his job.

"I didn't go to get a medal," Sims said. "I went out there because I signed the dotted line, was asked to do a job and was there doing my job."

Sims' major fear was that of the unknown.

"Not knowing what you're going up against was a concern of many of the pilots," Sims said.

For Maj. Alex G. Hetherington, Cobra helicopter pilot, being able to serve his country in Afghanistan left him with a good feeling.

"I'm glad I was able to help in a situation where the (Marine Corps) needed attack helicopter pilots," Hetherington said.

The various missions the pilots performed in Afghanistan during the mid and wrap-up stages of Operation Anaconda were escort, intelligence and security.

The pilots escorted various aircraft around Afghanistan for resupply missions, insertion of battalions, emergency medical evacuations and movement of detainees.

When intelligence missions arose the pilots provided reconnaissance by supplying video footage and keeping their eyes open for weapon caches and enemy stragglers.

To provide security for the ground troops, attack helicopter pilots would survey and fire ammunitions at suspected enemy bunkers and booby-traps.

For helicopter pilots, flying in Afghanistan was a challenge and learning experience, said Hetherington.

"It was a tough environment to fly in," Hetherington said.

Hetherington noted tough flying conditions due to high altitude movements, flying the birds on their maximum gross weight, occasional icing conditions, rugged terrain, dust and the inability to hover.

Through all these challenges and obstacles the pilots returned with no one hurt and no broken birds.

"The award is a validation of everything you've trained for," Hetherington said. "It was a good feeling to put your training to the test."

Even though many of the pilots say they were merely doing their job, according to Hetherington, it was the single most flight hours many of the Cobra pilots had every flown in a month.

Hetherington had mixed emotions about it being a good experience or not, but it definitely let him be a part of the news as it happened.

"It really drove home to me that here we were at the center of a large international incident in a place where I never thought I'd be," he said. "Only in the Marine Corps could you end up in a place like that."



# A MARINE'S CHRISTMAS POEM

*\*Editor's note: This poem is said to have originally been written by a Marine once stationed in Okinawa, Japan. Around the holidays, this poem makes its way around commands all around the globe as a reminder of the how deep the Marine Corps spirit runs through each of us and that whatever the time of year there are always Marines out doing their jobs to protect our freedom.*



Col. Charles Waterhouse illustration

**T'was the night before Christmas, he lived all alone  
In a one-bedroom house made of plaster and stone.  
I had come down the chimney with presents to give  
And to see whom in this house did live.**

**As I looked all around a strange sight I did see,  
No tinsel, no presents, not even a tree.  
No stockings by the fire, just boots full of sand.  
On the wall hung pictures of a far-away land.**

**With medals and badges, awards of all kinds,  
A sobering thought soon came to my mind.  
For this house was different, unlike any I'd seen.  
This was the house of a U.S. Marine.**

**I'd heard stories about them, so I had to see more.  
I walked down the hallway and pushed open the door.  
And there he lay sleeping. Silent. Alone.  
Curled up on the floor of his one-bedroom home.**

**He seemed so gentle, his face so serene.  
Not how I pictured a U.S. Marine.  
Was this the hero of whom I'd just read?  
Curled up on his poncho, a floor for his bed?**

**His head was clean shaven, his face weathered tan.  
I soon understood this was more than a man.  
For I realized families that I had just seen that night  
Owed their lives to these men, so willing to fight.**

**Soon around the nation the children would play  
And grown-ups would celebrate a bright Christmas Day.  
They enjoyed freedom each day and all year  
Because of Marines like the one lying here.**

**I couldn't help but wonder how many lay alone  
On a cold Christmas Eve in a land far from home.  
Just the very thought brought a tear to my eye.  
I dropped to my knees and I started to cry.**

**He must have awakened for I heard a rough voice.  
"Santa, Don't cry. This is my choice.  
I fight for freedom. I don't ask for more.  
My life is my God, my Country, my Corps."**

**With that he rolled over, drifted off into sleep.  
I couldn't control it, I continued to weep.  
I watched him for hours. So silent. So still.  
I noticed he shivered from the cold night's chill.**

**So I took off my jacket, the one made of red,  
To cover this Marine from his toes to his head.  
Then I put on his tee-shirt of scarlet and gold,  
With an eagle, globe and anchor emblazoned so bold.**

**Although it barely fit me, I began to swell with pride.  
For one shining moment, I was the Marine Corps deep inside.  
I didn't want to leave him, so quiet in the night,  
This guardian of honor, so willing to fight.**

**But, half asleep, he rolled over, and in a voice clean and pure,  
Said, "Carry on, Santa, it's Christmas Day - All Secure."  
One look at my watch and I knew he was right.**